

THE 2017 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

YEAR IN REVIEW: AN INVIGORATED GENERATION FOR CAUSES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

The Millennial Impact Report is an annual study of millennial cause engagement by examining the subject through a new lens each year since 2008.



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LEARNING HOW TO LISTEN TO A NEW VOICE IN PHILANTHROPY

Letter from the Founder

Millennials have found their voice. Or is it more accurate to say that the country is beginning to listen?

Achieve began researching how and why millennials become involved in social issues a decade ago. We hypothesized that a generation inculcated with a duty to “give back” would alter philanthropy forever.

We’ve seen (and reported) how much this generation’s social consciousness has influenced our world. Social entrepreneurship has skyrocketed. Corporations have expanded social responsibility and employee giving programs. Government has issued new social issue policies.

And then, in 2017, social issues grabbed the spotlight in quick succession and never let go, thanks to millennials’ involvement.

Millennials helped organize and took part in marches for women’s rights across the country. They joined in the outcry against banning refugees and immigrants from specific countries. They spoke up for people brought to this country illegally as children. They supported the rights of sexual harassment victims to be believed. And as 2018 began, they lent their considerable voices to the gun debate.

Millennials and their cause involvement have not always fit neatly into nonprofit industry categories. Yet, the industry’s delay in recognizing their value has not affected their desires to make life better for others.

They’re working to fix the problems they see in society using non-traditional methods without waiting for anyone else’s approval or participation. They’re not allowing themselves to be bogged down by infighting or labels or what the government, media or philanthropy expect of them.

Right now, millennials believe in organizations and in other ways to effect change. Together, millennials and nonprofits can create solutions. But, if we as nonprofit entities won’t adjust to their needs, millennials – our new and future constituents – will move on without us.



Derrick Feldmann

Founder, Millennial Impact Project

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2015, the Achieve research team reported that millennial engagement in causes was moving from cursory interest to activism, reflecting a maturation of the generation's inherent desire to do good. The shift was fairly quiet, much more so than anticipated even in 2016, when we hypothesized that a presidential election campaign would highlight social issues and thus spur millennials to heightened cause activity.

Then immediately following Donald Trump's win, millennial activism seemed to push social issues into the headlines.

Achieve developed a research study to address their activity based on these four questions:

1. How has millennial engagement and interest in causes changed since the presidential election?
2. What are the characteristics of social issues that tend to see higher millennial participation rates?
3. What are millennials' levels of engagement in these social issues, how are levels selected and how do they evolve?
4. What are the characteristics of millennials who participate at each level of engagement?

While involvement with causes overall remained fairly steady from last year, millennials who have been most passionate about causes and social issues (as evidenced by their behavior) have considerably increased their activity.

Our findings revealed that a distinct rise in cause engagement is motivated by concern that the country is headed in the wrong direction:

- › **Millennials have become vocal and visible in their frustrations with the status quo.** They are dissatisfied with President Trump and believe the country is moving in the wrong direction and will be off track a year from now.
- › **Millennials' interest in improving life for themselves or people they know or can see remains steady over time.** Their interest in the "greater good" can change, depending on the current environment.
- › **Millennials are driven to engage locally more than nationally.** Even those who engage nationally don't reduce their local activity as a result.
- › **Millennials may take actions they don't necessarily think will help the most.** Donating and using social media are used, but are not among the methods thought to be most influential.
- › **Even when their cause involvement had not increased since the election, millennials still believed they are more engaged than other people.** Though nearly half our survey group had not changed how frequently they'd acted, those who said their actions had *increased* far outnumbered those whose actions had *decreased*.
- › **Most millennials see themselves as supporters rather than activists.** Millennials who call themselves activists are ones who act with confidence and deliberateness for causes/social issues, even when doing so for groups they aren't a part of.
- › **Self-identification with labels (activist, advocate, ally, supporter) correlates to specific issues as well as specific actions.** As these descriptive labels are defined by actions, researchers found correlations between the two. However, researchers also found correlations between labels and issues, with social media use dropping below more traditional forms.

Millennials have expanded and amplified their previously muted and non-confrontational methods into movements for which support has spread with incredible speed. How have they been able to mobilize so quickly?

They haven't. Their beliefs and discussions and support have been there all along. They continued to support causes of interest by volunteering, raising funds and awareness, making connections and forming solutions.

This report reveals how millennials are giving government, nonprofits and corporations an opportunity to do what they think needs to be done to improve life for everyone in this country. They believe in organizations still ... but they also believe quite strongly in their own power to create the change they want to see in the world, and to ensure their peers are afforded the same rights and opportunities they feel every American should have.



INTRODUCTION

Under any circumstances, the election of a U.S. president can alter the landscape within which causes and social issues exist, along with how young adults with a philanthropic bent prioritize and react to them. However, in 2016, researchers at Achieve had a two-year window to examine millennials' attitudes and behaviors toward social issues during one of the most media-covered times of their generation: a contentious election campaign that involved the first female presidential candidate, a White House transition and the first year of a new type of U.S. president – one who came to office ready to run the country like a business.

Achieve published the first report in this two-year series, *2016 Millennial Impact Report: Cause Engagement During a U.S. Presidential Election Year*, having learned that **the attention a presidential election necessarily shines on social issues had not inspired millennials to get any more involved than they normally had been.**

Millennial cause engagement behaviors during the 2016 U.S. presidential election cycle were far more muted and passive than anticipated. Would that hold true for 2017?

This state of affairs did not last even to Inauguration Day in January. As research for the 2017 study got underway, researchers immediately began seeing two main avenues of behavior post-election:

- › millennials who declared themselves Trump supporters in the voting booth were staying loyal to their candidate, and
- › millennials who did not initially support Trump were becoming vocal by using activism on behalf of high-profile social issues.

The 2016 survey showed the effects of a presidential election campaign on millennials' cause engagement. Achieve's researchers now would watch and track the effects of the election itself.

The data, insights and recommendations contained in this report are the result.



METHODOLOGY

Researchers conducted the 2017 Millennial Impact Report study in three phases, as data and analysis from each validated the preceding and informed the following phase.

Unlike other Millennial Impact Reports, which began with quantitative methods of data collection, the initial phase of the 2017 study used qualitative data specifically to inform the phases to follow. Phase 1 interviews explored millennials' attitudes and perceptions about social issues. The Phase 2 survey (3,000 respondents) measured engagement behaviors in relation to these causes/social issues. Phase 3 employed quasi-ethnographic research with a subsample of the prior phase's respondents to probe more deeply into responses and gather the most timely data possible.

Together, these methods would allow researchers to effectively determine the rationales behind today's millennial cause engagement.

2017 Research Questions

The 2017 research study addresses the following questions:

1. How has millennial engagement and interest in causes changed since the presidential election?
2. What are the characteristics of social issues that tend to see higher millennial participation rates?
3. What are millennials' levels of engagement in these social issues, how are levels selected and how do they evolve?
4. What are the characteristics of millennials who participate at each level of engagement?

Phase 1: Interviews

Phase 1 of the research study began when President Trump was elected (November 2016). Soon after, the White House and the House of Representatives were under the control of the same party. Repeal of the Affordable Care Act became Republicans' top priority, and millennials watched – some for the first time – a government in transition.

Suddenly, media coverage of the workings of the federal government exploded, along with President Trump's ban on refugees from Muslim countries and the Women's March on Washington, which drew hundreds of thousands of women and men to the nation's capital and spawned similar marches across the country.

Headlines During Phase 1:

- › Federal judge blocks Trump's ban on blocking transgender people from the military¹
- › Texas Church Shooting²
- › GOP Tax Plan³
- › UN Condemns Trump Decision to move US Embassy to Jerusalem⁴
- › Sexual Harassment on the Hill⁵

¹ cnn.com/2017/10/30/politics/judge-blocks-trump-transgender-military-ban

² cnn.com/2017/11/05/us/texas-church-shooting-latest

³ cnbc.com/2017/11/03/the-good-the-bad-and-the-money-what-the-gop-tax-plan-means-for-you.html

⁴ cnn.com/2017/12/21/politics/haley-un-jerusalem

⁵ washingtonpost.com/politics/training-is--first-step-in-stopping-sexual-harassment-in-the-house-lawmakers-say/2017/11/14/db95e40a-c956-11e7-b0cf-7689a9f2d84e_story.html

Phase 2: Survey

As researchers sent the national survey instrument for Phase 2 into the field (July 19 – Aug. 8, 2017), hurricanes in the southeast and wildfires in the west were causing massive damage and destruction – and an untold number of millennials volunteered, donated and did what they could to help. At the same time, President Trump tweeted about banning transgender people from the military, and two senators proposed reducing legal immigration by half, both prompting public response.

Phase 3: Quasi-ethnographic Observation

The study's final phase (Oct. 23, 2017, to Jan. 2, 2018) saw the Las Vegas massacre, the passing of the president's tax overhaul bill by the U.S. House – and the birth of a movement. *The New York Times* story revealing decades of sexual harassment by movie mogul Harvey Weinstein "prompted 1.7 million #METOO tweets in 85 countries to come forward ... and there seems to be finally a consensus that sexual harassment must stop."⁶

During all this, Achieve's researchers conducted quasi-ethnographic observations to bring depth and insights to their analysis by:

- › documenting participants' current social media activity,
- › collecting artifact social media activity data,
- › surveying participants four times about their thoughts, perceptions and behaviors, and
- › tracking current events and major issues covered by the media and the timing of same.

Though researchers did not ask respondents precisely what influenced each of their responses, such events and experiences provided context for the millennial landscape at the time.

⁶ occupy.com, "10 amazing social movement struggles in 2017 that give us reason to hope," Nick Buxton, author, Dec. 23, 2017



FINDINGS: WHAT WE LEARNED IN 2017

On the heels of the 2016 Millennial Impact Report, which revealed that a presidential election campaign had little to no effect on millennials' level of cause involvement, Achieve's researchers embarked on an investigation to determine whether and how an election itself and its resulting change in the presidency might influence this generation.

From November 2016 to January 2018, these researchers would investigate, analyze and come to understand the attitudes and behaviors of millennials as they developed a deepening interest in causes and social issues.

Research Question 1: How has millennial engagement and interest in causes changed since the presidential election?

The first question addressed in this study – How has millennial engagement and interest in causes changed since the presidential election? – encapsulates the reason for conducting the research for the study.

In 2016, Achieve's researchers found that an upcoming presidential election did not spur millennials to action. In 2017, with a new president in office, they found the opposite to be true.

Thus, these findings are best viewed in their historical context and with a solid understanding of the millennial mindset toward the state of the country during 2017, President Trump's first year in office.

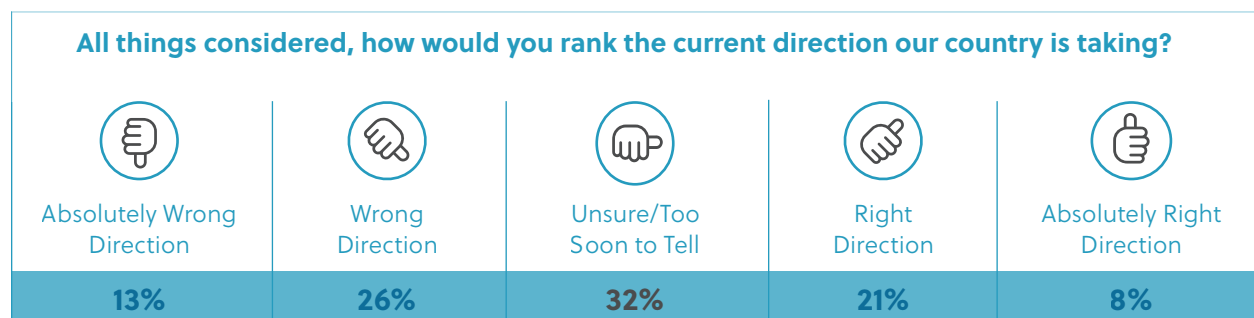
Finding 1: Millennials believe the U.S. is headed in the wrong direction.

From our Phase 2 responses, more than a third (39%) of millennial respondents said the country is headed in the wrong direction, while fewer than a third (29%) said it's going in the right direction. The final third were unsure (32%).

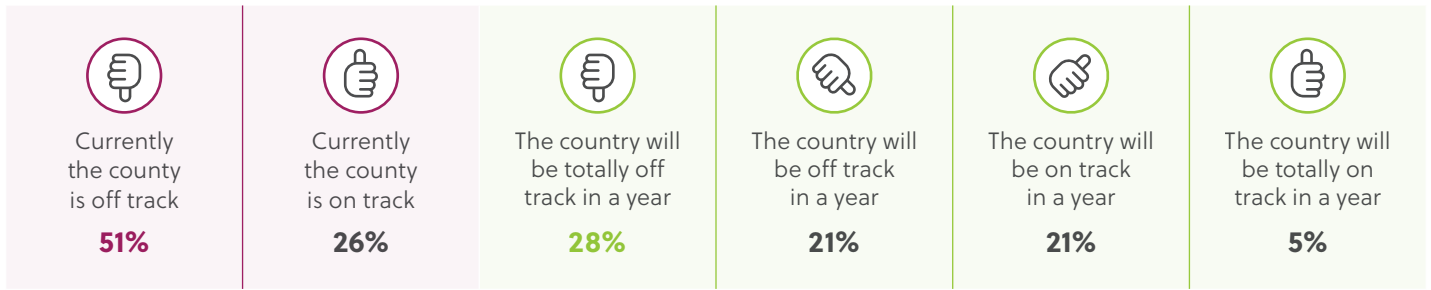
Throughout 2017, Achieve researchers found that millennials more often expressed dissatisfaction than satisfaction both with President Trump and the direction in which the country is headed (for now and the future). This sentiment did not waver throughout the 2017 investigation – from the initial exploratory phase of this study (April 2017), through surveying a representative national sample of 3,000 millennials (July 19-Aug. 8, 2017) and in the final quasi-ethnographic phase (Oct. 23, 2017 – Jan. 2, 2018).

During the last phase of this investigation, researchers went back to earlier survey respondents to create a small subsample for closer examination, follow-up surveys and results validation. With this group, more than half (51%) said the country today was off track compared to one year ago, while a quarter (26%) believed it was on the right track, and nearly a quarter (23%) were unsure.

9 MONTHS AFTER THE ELECTION



12 MONTHS AFTER THE ELECTION



Results from the subsample about the country’s future were similarly somber. Nearly half (49%) of this group believed the country was headed in the wrong direction and would be off track (21%) or totally off track (28%) a year from now. Just over a quarter believed America would be on the right track then (21%) or totally on track (5%). The same percentage (26%) were uncertain.

Finding 2: Nearly half of millennials are either unsatisfied or extremely unsatisfied with President Trump.

As reported in Phase 2, half of the millennial sample reported voting for Hillary Clinton (51%), whereas about a third cast a vote for candidate Donald Trump (35%). However, researchers did not assume that voting behavior or level of satisfaction with the direction the country is taking (see charts in Finding 1, above) necessarily indicated the same attitudes toward the president.

Twenty-seven percent of the millennials surveyed in Phase 2 were satisfied or extremely satisfied with Trump as president. Nearly half (49%) of millennials said they were either unsatisfied or extremely unsatisfied with the president, and about a quarter (24%) were neutral.

In specific sub-segments (reported in more detail in the Phase 2 report, *The Power of Voice: A New Era Of Cause Activation & Social Issue Adoption*, more female millennials (59%) were less satisfied with President Trump than males (39%). Younger millennials (57%) were less satisfied than older millennials (42%). Each of three major minority groups (black/African American, Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, Asian) were less satisfied than white/Caucasian respondents (up to 30% more).

	All Respondents	White / Caucasian	Spanish / Hispanic / Latino(a)	Black / African American	Asian
Extremely Unsatisfied	35%	27%	45%	50%	36%
Unsatisfied	14%	12%	13%	19%	22%
Neutral	24%	25%	24%	19%	25%
Satisfied	17%	22%	10%	7%	12%
Extremely Satisfied	10%	13%	7%	4%	5%

Slightly less than half (43%) of survey respondents (Phase 2) believed President Trump has not addressed the causes/social issues that are important to them at all; 8 percent said he has addressed them very well, and 21 percent were unsure.

In the small subsample (surveyed during Phase 3), 60 percent of respondents reported being either extremely unsatisfied (49%) or unsatisfied (11%) with President Trump.

Research Question 2: What are the characteristics of social issues that tend to see higher millennial participation rates?

The causes/social issues that matter most personally to millennials remain constant.

Overwhelmingly, millennials are interested in causes/social issues relevant to quality of life for the greatest part of the population and/or marginalized or disenfranchised individuals/groups – though their interests and passions may change as a result of public popularity, personal lifestyle changes and other influences.

Finding 1: The causes and social issues millennials remain most interested in are those of personal consequence, while their interest fluctuates among issues that affect the greater good.

Millennials are interested in improving the quality of life for people they see as needing such help; their interest in the causes/social issues of personal consequence remains constant. However, their interest in causes/social issues of national or global consequence can and do change, dependent on the current environment.

Among the subsample, for example, education, healthcare and employment appeared to be of greatest interest *because of the ways these topics personally (or immediately) affected millennials*. However, issues of civil rights/race, climate change, immigration and net neutrality were of interest *because of their influence on society at large*.

“[My concern with] healthcare especially [has increased] because I have aging parents who are going to be impacted. And given my volunteerism with the ambulance service, I have a lot of patients on Medicaid and Medicare. I am concerned what will happen with them.”⁷

Before the 2016 election, millennials in aggregate reported being most concerned with the issue of education.

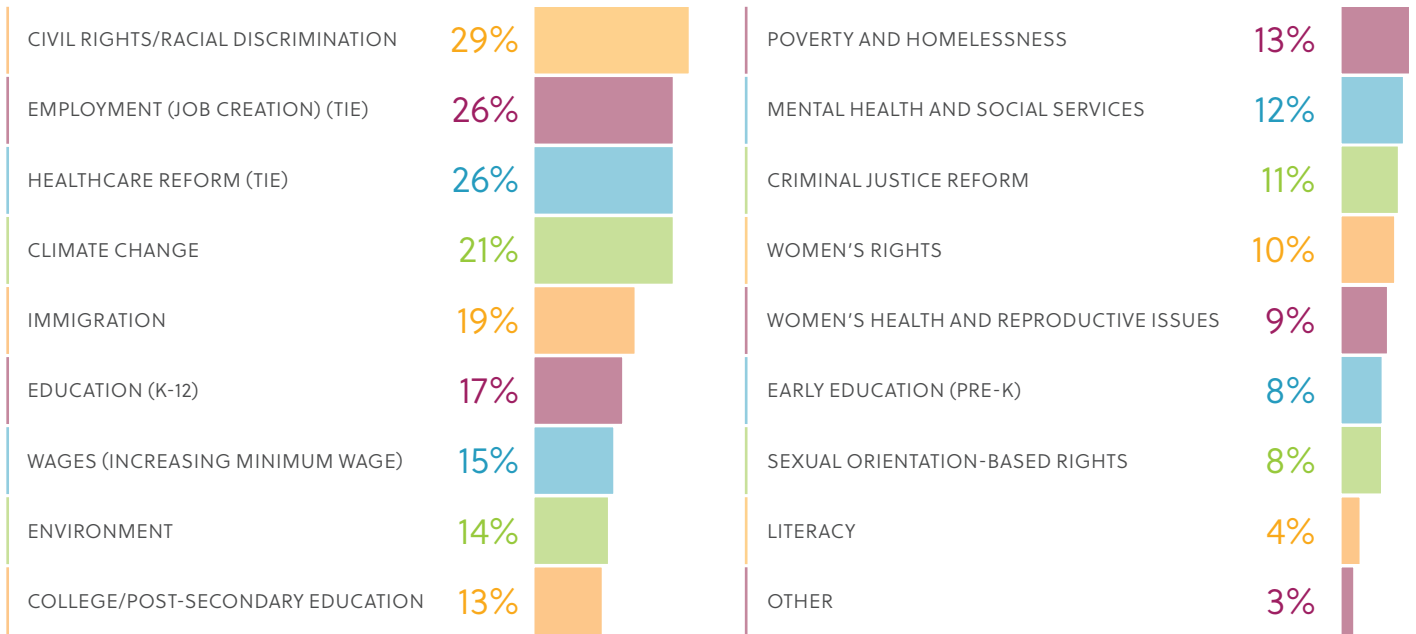
Six months into President Trump’s first term, however, the No. 1 cause/social issue for millennials became civil rights/racial discrimination, which topped both employment (job creation) and healthcare. This shift reflects the increased activism and media attention on women’s rights and immigration occurring during this period.

⁷ All quotations (unless otherwise noted) are from millennial respondents to surveys or in-person interviews for this report.



“The intensity or level of commitment I now plan to assume is [due to] an awareness that we are going to have to re-litigate some of the issues we thought were put to bed. It’s an acknowledgment that these [issues] are now open for change and shouldn’t be, and it’s a commitment [to ensuring] we don’t go backward.”

CAUSES/SOCIAL ISSUES OF MOST INTEREST*



*Since each respondent could choose 1-3 issues, these figures won't total 100%.



A review of participants' social media platforms and the content they shared supports these findings. Researchers followed participants on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, yet they posted, shared and liked only on Facebook. The table below outlines the topics for which information was posted, shared or liked and on what dates.

CAUSE/SOCIAL ISSUE MENTIONED IN ITEM SHARED, LIKED OR POSTED ABOUT

Date(s) the Share, Like or Post Occurred	Education	Health/ Healthcare	Employment	Civil Rights/ Race	Environmental/ Climate Change	Immigration	Net Neutrality
October 27		President declaring opioid epidemic		NYC and slavery	Climate change - Raptor Resource Project - Pesticides		
November 3		Change.org organic labeling petition, posts about organic food			Puppy mills - Food waste		
November 10	California education - Montessori education	Change.org healthcare petition - Antibiotics - Vaccines		Texas mass shooting - NFL boycott - "Just Be You" shirt, #justbeyou, several other #			
November 17		Vaccines		Race for killed child	PETA criticism		
November 24		Vaccines - Polio - Change.org organic labeling petition, posts about organic food			Weather/ global warming	Border wedding	Change.org link
December 1		AIDS fundraiser - Drug costs	Employment/ Trump	Obama and Libya slave trade		Immigration issues California - Immigrants and rape	Change.org link
December 8				LGBT discrimination - Police and unarmed man - Australia and gay marriage	Animal sanctuary - Trump's stance on national parks - Animal abuser - Wildfires - geo-engineered - Climate blockers - Toxic chemicals	European migrant crisis - Immigration ban winning	Change.org link
December 15		Pro dandelions (organic food) - Mental illness	Opposition to raising minimum wage		Weather/ global warming - Lifeline Animal Project	NYC bomber - Sweden pension immigration issue	Change.org link
December 22		Change.org organic labeling petition, posts about organic food		NFL kneeling	Climate engineer story	Anti-immigration	
December 29		Change.org organic labeling petition, posts about organic food					

Finding 2: Millennials are driven to engage locally more than nationally. Even those who engage nationally don't reduce their local activity as a result.

In millennials' cause involvement, local entities had the highest priority. Trends from the data collected from the small subsample (Phase 3 survey respondents) shed light on how millennials chose local or national engagement:

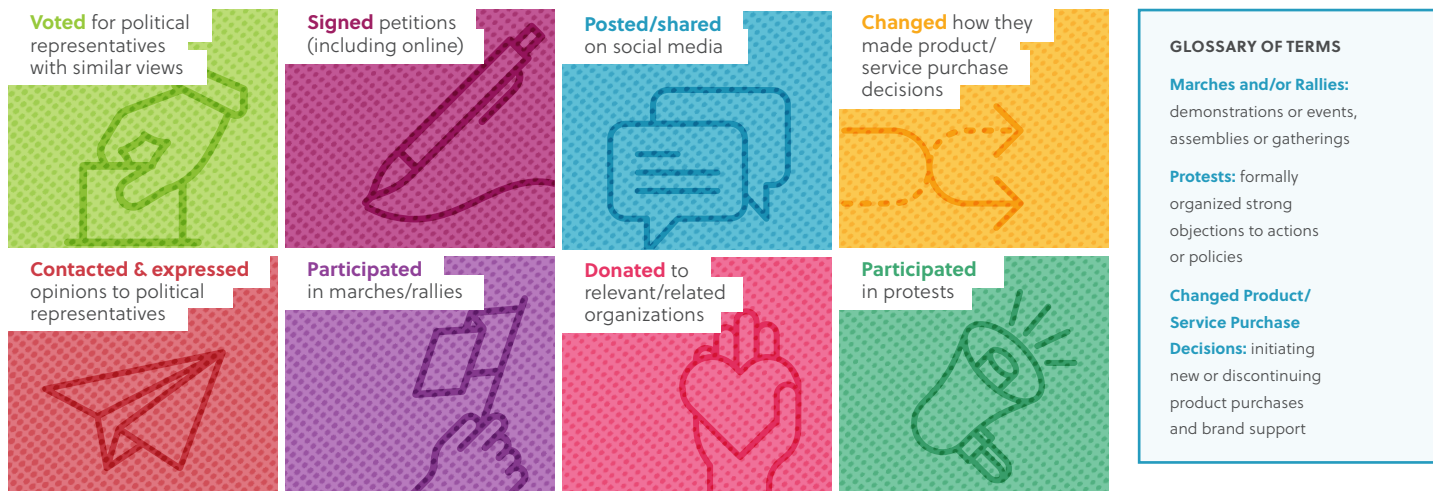
- › When causes/social issues affected respondents more **personally** (education, healthcare, etc.), respondents indicated a higher likelihood to engage locally.
- › When causes/social issues were of **broader consequence** (net neutrality, climate change, etc.), they tended to engage more nationally.
- › When issues were **both of personal and broader consequence** (civil rights, immigration, etc.), respondents were more likely to engage both locally and nationally in equal measure.

Research Question 3: What are millennials' levels of engagement in social issues, how are levels selected and how do they evolve?

While some actions are fluid among diverse causes/social issues, other behaviors are more specific to particular causes/social issues and in certain contexts or seasons.

Finding 1: The actions taken for causes/social issues are not synonymous with the most influential way to create change.

Respondents were asked to select which actions they have taken related to up to three causes/social issues they most care about. As illustrated in the graphic, voting was the No. 1 action taken. The top actions were (in order, left to right):⁸



Voting: Millennials think voting is important: 66 percent believe it will lead to the change they want to see, 71 percent see it as activism, 77 percent consider it the duty of every citizen, and 65 percent said they voted in the last election.

During the final phase of this investigation, researchers inquired about special elections held in 2017 in some states. Most of the small subsample (62%) indicated they did not vote in these elections, some because their state did not hold one. Of those that did vote in these special elections, however, nearly three-quarters (73%) did so to deliberately support a specific candidate, not to oppose or support the current administration.

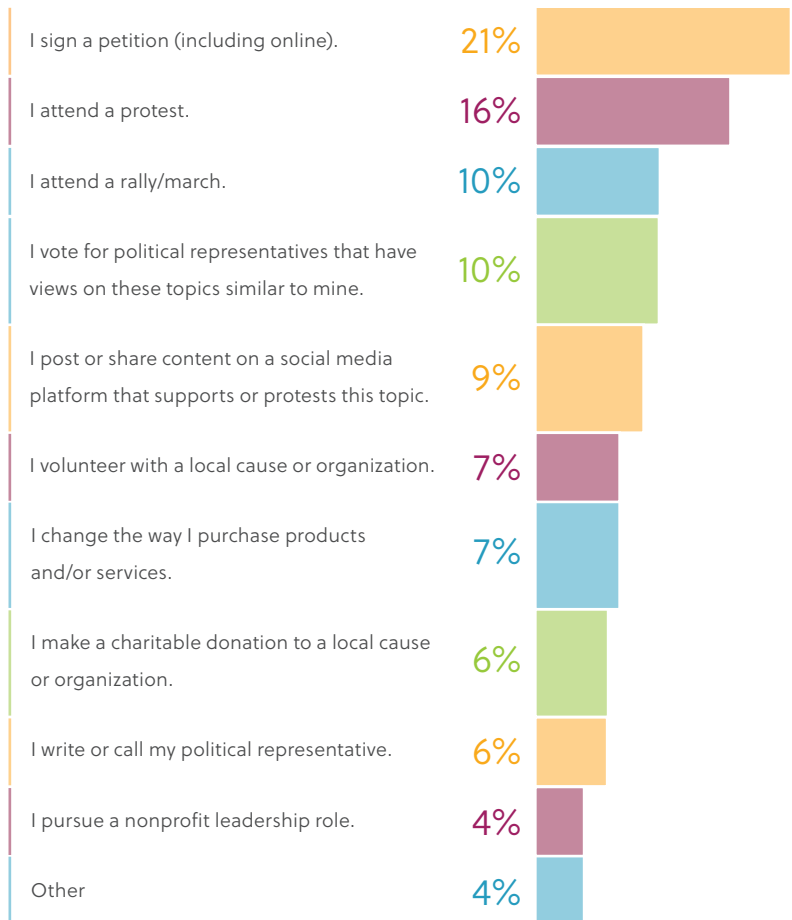
⁸ See Appendix B for the full list of actions and the number of times each action was selected.

Took no action: Respondents also had the option of reporting that they took no action. We received a total of 1,765 such responses (out of 15,426 total responses), making it the third-most-selected action.

Trends from the subsample indicated little change in actions reported in Phase 2 of this study compared to the last phase (three months later). Petitioning and taking no action on behalf of causes/social issues of interest still ranked higher than most other actions.

Social media: Though social media sharing/posting about causes/social issues was an action taken during this time, researchers found that most millennials did not appear to use social media platforms to actively protest or promote causes/social issues of interest, but simply to pass along information. This may not be surprising; trends in data also indicated that most millennial respondents believed/recognized the national discourse concerning political ideologies, social and religious values, and civil rights/race to be largely uncivil.

THIS IS A TYPICAL BEHAVIOR FOR ME
(RANKED AS MOST INFLUENTIAL)



Trends from the final phase's sub-sample illustrated that donations to causes/social issues of interest were low, with most millennials not having made any donations within the prior two weeks. When donations were reported, they were predominantly \$25 or less.

Though voting was the No. 1 action actually taken (see graphic, page 11), it was not the behavior millennials considered to be the most effective in influencing change. At the same time, volunteering joined the list of most-selected actions.

"Even if I were doing a whole lot, I would probably still feel like I could be doing something more."



"With mentoring, I [consider myself] highly engaged because that's as grassroots as it gets. I'm interacting with an individual at risk for ill-fated things like failing school, [and] I'm highly engaged in changing or directing his behavior toward the path that would steer him away from those things."

“With case managing at the clinic, I [consider it] more middle engagement. ... I’m not changing the social landscape; I’m just helping people navigate what already exists, and if what exists is broken, I can’t change that. I’m just helping mediate a broken system.”

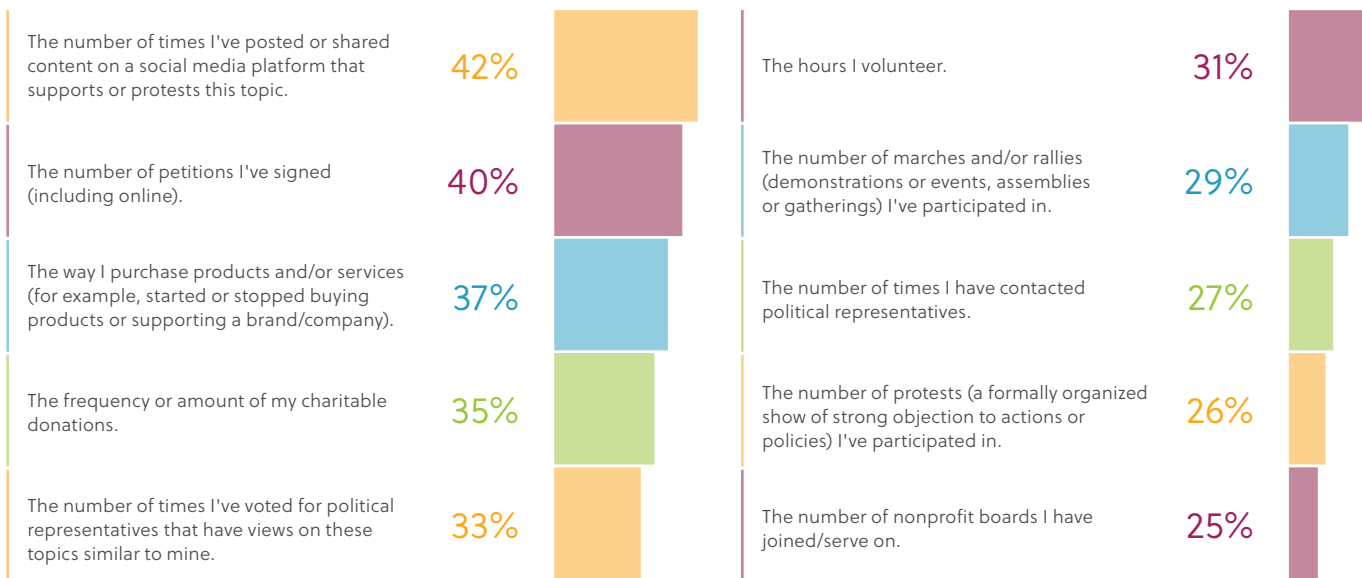
When it comes to choosing the best avenue for solving social issues and inciting the change they want to see, a slightly higher percentage of respondents (57%) believed more in the power of organizations than in the power of their own actions (53%). Less than a fifth (14%) thought their actions wouldn’t lead to improved conditions. A full third, though (33%, a notable figure) were uncertain.

One year after the presidential election, close to half (43%) of the small subsample said their actions, including voting, would lead to improvements; 21 percent did not believe so, and 36 percent were unsure.

Finding 2: Though their cause involvement did not increase since the election, most millennials still believe they are more engaged than other people.

The top answer (49% or higher) for every action was that millennials had not changed the frequency of such actions since the election. At the same time, however, respondents who said their actions had increased far outnumbered those whose actions had decreased since the election.

INCREASE IN BEHAVIORS SINCE 2016 ELECTION



While the majority of respondents said the frequency of their actions had not changed since the election overall, they did see themselves as more active than family, friends and others (whether they knew them or not).

IN SUPPORTING SOCIAL ISSUES AND/OR CAUSES IN GENERAL, RESPONDENTS SAID THEY'RE:

More Active Than

Family	44%
Friends	34%
Non Family/Friends	32%

About As Active As

Family	28%
Friends	30%
Non Family/Friends	23%

Less Active Than

Family	15%
Friends	23%
Non Family/Friends	30%

Research Question 4: What are the characteristics of millennials who participate at each level of engagement?

Millennials' understanding of the terms activist, advocate, ally and supporter generally are consistent with historical/traditional definitions — yet they do not use these terms to describe their own behavior, particularly where activist is concerned. As in 2016, most millennials don't self-identify as activists, but rather as supporters.

Finding 1: Millennials who call themselves activists are ones who act with confidence and deliberateness for causes/social issues, even when doing so for groups they aren't a part of. Most millennials see themselves as supporters.

This view of activist may explain why, when asked how they would label their support on behalf of each issue of interest, respondents most often said they considered themselves a cause/social issue supporter (49%) – far above the percentage selecting the label of activist (21%), advocate (17%) or ally (11%).

Those who identify as activists have greater confidence in the ability of their own (71%) and organizations (18% somewhat, 31% confident and 39% very confident) to create change.

“To me, an activist is someone who is out there, who is vocal, who is pushing, who is involved, who is taking the steps needed to enact change or bring attention to a change. I would qualify my activity as such.”

Finding 2: Self-identification with labels (activist, advocate, ally, supporter) correlates to specific issues as well as specific actions.

As these descriptive labels are largely defined by actions, it's no surprise that researchers found correlations between the two. However, researchers also found correlations between labels and issues.

Issues:

Activists, advocates and allies outnumbered supporters on the issues of early education, postsecondary education, criminal justice, sexual orientation and women's rights. Supporters tended to choose employment, poverty and wages as the issues they cared most about.

Actions:

	Activist	Advocate	Ally	Supporter
1	Voted	Voted	Voted	Voted
2	Signed Petition	Signed Petition	Signed Petition	Signed Petition
3	Contacted Representative	Posted on Social Media	Posted on Social Media	Posted on Social Media
4	Participated in Marches	Contacted Representative	Contacted Representative	Changed Purchase of Products and Services
5	Posted on Social Media	Participated in Marches	Participated in Marches	No Action



“I don’t think I am an activist ... I’ve always been very averse to protesting an issue. I’d rather help organize the protest than participate in it. But for me, activism doesn’t have to be marching in the streets. ... I can [be an activist] with what I do professionally and in my volunteering life.”

“I feel like you can be an activist in small ways that make a big impact. For me, by making a donation and talking to my friends about it, I might be inspiring action in others. I pay attention to where I spend my money, too, [which is] the biggest impact you can have in certain areas. So, I would say I am [an activist], but not in the same way other people might think.”

Finding 3: Demographic traits have predicted certain behaviors in the past. Now, however, those behaviors can no longer be taken for granted.

During the 2017 investigation, researchers discovered that the 2016 presidential election campaign marked divergences in millennial cause participation by several demographic traits.

Race/ethnicity: Asian Americans are the fastest-growing racial/ethnic group in the country. Yet, despite having a larger upswing of new voters in the 2016 election than any other racial/ethnic category, this group had the lowest percentage of voter turnout overall, including among millennials.

Among Asian Americans, not voting is a strong predictor of non-involvement in social issues. Moreover, less than a year after Donald Trump took office, Achieve researchers discovered that among self-identified Asian American millennials, this low propensity to support social causes had degraded even further.

Gender: In every presidential election since 1980, adult females have out-voted males (proportionately). This did not hold true for millennials in the 2016 election: more males said they registered to vote than females, and more males than females reported casting a vote.

Further, in Phase 2 of the 2017 research, voting was the No. 1 action both genders preferred to take in support of a cause. The other typical actions rounding out the top five actions for males involved overt behaviors: signing petitions, contacting political representatives, using social media and participating in marches/rallies. Females, on the other hand, reported that if they didn’t vote, their next-most-likely behavior was to take no action. Females’ belief in their own ability to effect change had weakened substantially, as had their belief in organizations to create change, while males’ belief in themselves and organizations remained steady or increased.

OVERALL TAKEAWAYS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Takeaway 1: Millennials strive for a world in which conditions are better than they are today and will continue to get better for everyone.

In this mindset, the status quo does not resonate (and likely never will); they don't see any way to address causes and solve social issues that affect lives, including their own, except through change.

When this generation is dissatisfied with the state of things or how a social issue is being addressed, they will act. The activity immediately following the presidential election and in response to political decisions is a prime example, as investigated in this report.

And when they act, millennials are thoughtful in their behavior. Depending on the nature of the issue at hand, they may prefer to vote rather than protest, or act locally rather than through a national organization. They may prefer to act individually, then at other times need to gather as we see in marches and protests. They may or may not look to a nonprofit for guidance. These decisions appear to depend much on whether the issue affects them personally or is an overarching societal challenge.

Regardless of how they choose to act, they will act on behalf of the causes and social issues they are most interested in. They will have their voices heard.

Recommendation: Harness millennial dissatisfaction with the status quo and demonstrate how they can be part of the solution through your organization.

Don't be shy about sharing your stance on important causes/social issues and what you're going to do to advance progress, remembering to focus on how your donors, volunteers and others make the work possible. Share stories of individuals whose lives have improved through your efforts. If you are a local organization, get to know the millennials interested in your issue and take a personal approach to giving them a platform to share their voice. If you are a national organization, articulate the power of the individual and the collective voice to solve society's challenges.

Takeaway 2: Millennials are more involved in causes than ever, and they don't care much how we label or categorize them.

Millennials don't think of themselves in terms of the transactional role they play with an organization (donor, activist, volunteer, advocate, etc.). They simply view themselves as people who believe change is necessary, and they are certain they can bring it about.

Research continues to show that people do not give out of loyalty to an institution. Especially with millennials, they support an issue to improve the lives of others.

Recommendation: Refocus messaging and infrastructure to align with millennials' belief in themselves as having many assets to use on behalf of a cause.

Marketers, fundraisers, volunteer coordinators and activism departments must consistently work as a closely coordinated team to develop deeper relationships with millennials who believe in your cause; managers must ensure an environment of teamwork rather than competition for engaging millennials. Establish ways to collect and share stories that illustrate your influence on an issue (focusing on how supporters made that influence felt, rather than emphasizing your organization).

Takeaway 3: While millennials share news about causes/social issues they care about, they view current online discourse as uncivil and so do not engage in it.

Millennials are posting and sharing about the causes and social issues they believe in, using a non-confrontational approach to gaining support for their position. However, they are not actively engaged in the exchange of ideas. As Achieve found in its 2016 research, millennials tend to avoid opportunities for conflict about polarizing issues – to knowingly bring up what one knows will create tension is seen as foisting one’s opinion on others.

Recommendation: Tailor your messages to your target audiences, which should include millennials.

In messaging about your cause to millennials, include:

- › positive, emotion-based language (how does this cause affect an individual) and factual language (details of or factors influencing the cause)
- › short- and long-term calls to action and desired outcomes
- › opportunities to take immediate, one-time actions as well as for longer-term involvement

Remember to package all this in ways that are easily shareable.



BACKGROUND: THE MILLENNIAL IMPACT PROJECT

The Millennial Impact Project is the most comprehensive and trusted study of America's millennial generation (born 1980-2000) and their involvement with social causes and movements.

Supported by the Case Foundation, Achieve continues to lead the national research team that has published more than a dozen reports since beginning our study of millennials in 2009, including six years of the Millennial Impact Report. With more than 100,000 participants in these six studies alone, The Millennial Impact Project has helped nonprofit organizations, corporations and individuals around the world stay current on the best approaches to cultivating the interest and involvement of this generation.

Each year, The Millennial Impact Project looks at millennials and their cause engagement with an eye toward refining what we know and can share. The first four reports in this project (available at themillennialimpact.com) focused on the relationships between millennials and nonprofit organizations/entities. In 2014 and 2015, this focus shifted to examine millennial behaviors and attitudes toward involvement with giving, volunteering and social good specifically as it occurs in the workplace, including how relationships between employees and their superiors impact cause engagement. In 2016, we studied how a U.S. presidential election might influence millennials' involvement with causes.

Why Study Millennials?

Millennials are shaping the way people give, volunteer, gather and spread information about causes; as the largest generation in the country¹¹ and in the workplace¹², their preferences are well on the way to becoming the norm. We study them to give companies, organizations and cause professionals the insights they need to connect authentically with this growing generation.

The Achieve research team intentionally doesn't compare generations. First, similar methodologies related to the cause perceptions and behaviors of other generations are not available; second, social and cultural norms across generations are not constants. Most importantly, however, we understand the power this generation has in altering the cause space for decades to come.

Why Study Cause Engagement?

Because of this generation's sheer size and the demonstrated high propensity for its members to participate in cause work, millennial involvement today and into the near future can mean the success or failure of social movements and causes.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In past Millennial Impact Reports, Achieve researchers began their mixed methods investigations using quantitative methods of data collection first, followed by a qualitative approach. For the 2017 study, however, the team chose to use a small purposive sample of millennials' attitudes and perceptions toward social issues to inform the structure of subsequent research for this study. Therefore, researchers launched this year's research with qualitative data collection, followed by a quantitative approach.

These findings then became the foundation and framework for an intensive qualitative investigation of millennials' actions related to specific social issues.

The research plan was structured in three phases:

Phase 1 Discovery: Interviews and focus groups (qualitative methods)

Phase 2 Investigation: Survey (quantitative method)

Phase 3 Validation: Quasi-ethnographic investigation (qualitative method)

Phase 1: Discovery

Phase 1 was designed to initiate dialogue between millennials and researchers as a means of understanding which specific elements should be further investigated during subsequent quantitative research (Phase 2). Telephone interviews and focus groups (qualitative methods) took place in April 2017.

In this first phase of the investigation, Achieve employed two qualitative approaches:

- › Short telephone interviews (30-65 minutes)
- › Focus groups

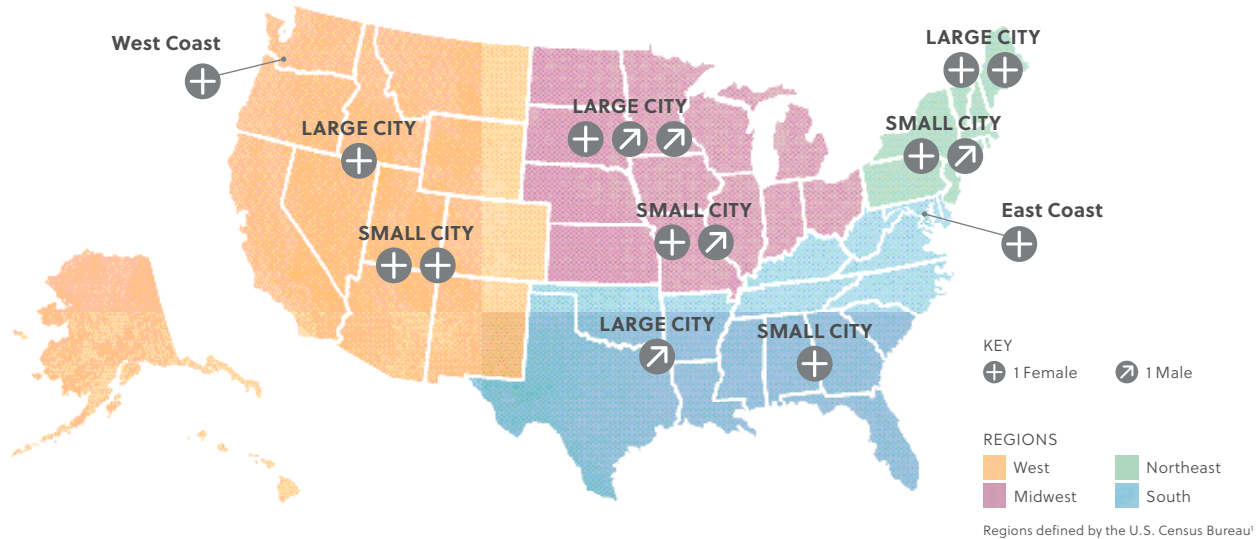
Achieve researchers constructed a small purposive sample of millennials (n=16) from across the four regions of the United States. We initiated recruitment of this sample by contacting a group of individuals who had downloaded previous Millennial Impact Reports. Therefore, this millennial sample was deliberately composed of individuals demonstrating a predisposition for interest in and likely engagement in cause-related behavior.

Subsequently, interested potential participants completed a brief screener that inquired about select demographic characteristics, including gender and geographic location. From this group, a diverse sample of individuals representing large and small cities as well as large cosmopolitan cities along each coast were identified and invited to participate in interviews and focus groups. Although male and female millennials from both large and small cities in each region and on both coasts were recruited, in some areas only female interviewees attended the scheduled interview or focus group.⁹

Small cities include towns and cities with a population of < 200K; large cities are operationalized as cities with metropolitan areas > 1M; large cosmopolitan cities include cities along the Western and Eastern Seaboards that boast diverse and multi-cultural populations within metropolitan areas > 1M.

⁹ Historically, more women than men have participated in Millennial Impact research.

The purposive sample in Phase 1 comprised male and female millennials from the following areas:¹⁰



We used this phase of data collection to discover what social issues millennials, as a generational cohort, are most interested in, the rationale for their interest and how they engaged with such issues. In the next phase of this research study, we prepared to deliberately investigate individual subsegments of millennials, including characteristics of importance such as gender, age, race, ethnicity and geographic location.

Phase 2: Investigation

In Phase 2, Achieve researchers constructed a survey instrument (a quantitative method) informed by data and findings from Phase 1. **The survey was in the field July 19-Aug. 8, 2017.**

Achieve researchers constructed this survey instrument to investigate revelations reported in Phase 1. The survey focused on parsing respondents' attitudes and perceptions of various causes and/or social issues, their behavior(s) as they engaged with them and the influences driving them. Questions were based on initial outcomes from the first phase of this research study.

To form a pool of potential respondents that would be representative of U.S. millennials ages 18-37, the research team used quota sampling to provide a proportional sample based on U.S. Census Bureau millennial cohort data for gender, race, age, education level and geographic region, then drew a nonprobability sample of 3,000 participants matching these demographics from an opt-in panel.

Sample demographics for this research study yielded characteristics indicative of the millennial population in the United States as reported by other research organizations. As the Brookings Institute reported, "Overall, millennials are 55.8 percent white and nearly 30 percent 'new minorities' (Hispanics, Asians and those identifying as two or more races)."¹¹ Our sample consisted of 56 percent white/Caucasian millennials and 44 percent of minority ethnicities (combined). Regarding marital status, the Gallup organization¹² reported 59 percent of millennials are single and have never been married; in the Achieve sample, 49 percent were single and another 10 percent living with a partner. Geographically, just as in our sample, more millennials live in the South and West parts of the United States.

¹⁰ [census.gov/geo/reference/webatlas/regions.html](https://www.census.gov/geo/reference/webatlas/regions.html)

¹¹ [brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2016/06/28/diversity-defines-the-millennial-generation)

¹² [gallup.com/poll/191462/gallup-analysis-millennials-marriage-family.aspx](https://www.gallup.com/poll/191462/gallup-analysis-millennials-marriage-family.aspx)

Methodology for Phase 2: Investigation

// Phase 2 Sample* **N=3,000**

GENDER	
Female	51%
Male	48%
Non-binary/third or self-described gender	1%

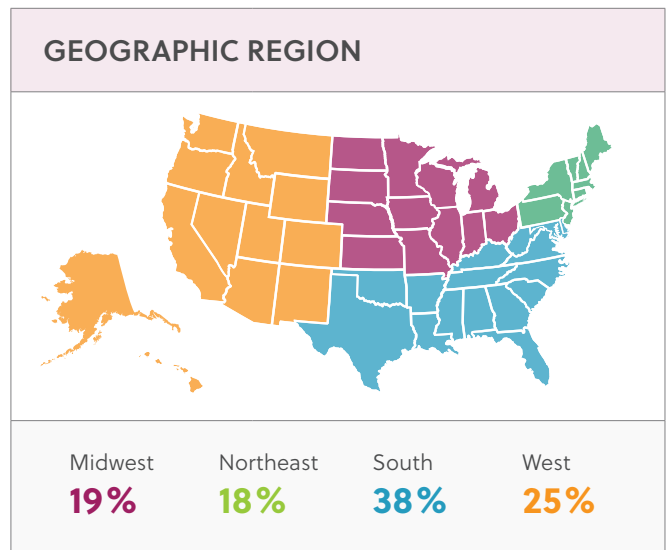
MARITAL STATUS	
Single, never married	49%
Married	38%
Living with partner	10%
Separated	1%
Divorced	2%
Widowed	<1%

EMPLOYMENT STATUS	
Employed full time	41%
Employed part time	17%
Student	12%
Homemaker	10%
Not employed but looking for work	10%
Self-employed	5%
Unable to work	3%
Not employed and not looking for work	2%

RACE/ETHNICITY	
White/Caucasian	56%
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino(a)	19%
Black/African American	16%
Asian	6%
Multiple Races	2%
Other	1%

AGE	
18-24	40%
25-30	33%
31-37	28%

PERSONAL INCOME	
Under \$20,000	30%
\$20,000-\$40,000	22%
\$40,001-\$75,000	18%
\$75,001-\$100,000	12%
\$100,001-\$150,000	7%
\$150,001-\$200,000	3%
\$200,001 or more	2%
Prefer not to answer	6%



HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL ATTAINED	
High school (grades 9-12, no degree)	11%
High school graduate	33%
Some college (1-4 years, no degree)	21%
Associate's degree (occupational or academic)	7%
Bachelor's degree	17%
Master's degree	8%
Professional school degree	2%
Doctorate degree	1%

* Due to rounding, percentages will not all equal 100.

¹³ These choices were created based on residential location definitions by the Housing Assistance Council.

The survey specifically asked respondents about their levels of interest and engagement in causes/social issues, specifically focused on the following topics:

- › Why, how and at what level they engaged in these causes and/or social issues.
- › Which of their actions did or did not achieve the desired outcomes.
- › How their attitudes and behaviors had changed or remained the same since the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Phase 3: Quasi-Ethnographic Inquiry

Researchers developed the third phase of this study to augment, explicate and validate findings from Phase 1 and Phase 2. Therefore, to triangulate methodologies of data collection, we based this phase of the research study on ethnographic principles of examining individuals' cultures through behavior observation and inquiry techniques to obtain attitudinal and archival data.

Ethnographic inquiry is a qualitative approach that allows researchers to examine shared patterns of a culture by observing and interviewing participants, immersing themselves in the daily lives of people within the culture and studying “the meaning, the behavior, the language and the interaction among members of the culture-sharing group.”¹⁴ Ethnography also has been defined as “observation plus any other appropriate methods, techniques, etc., including ... archive work, if appropriate for the topic.”¹⁵

We recruited a small, purposive sample of millennials to better understand the diverse causes/social issues of most interest, the reasons for their interest and the ways in which they were involved with them. More specifically, this sample was drawn from Phase 2 survey respondents who indicated an interest in participating in this final step of the research study. From Oct. 23, 2017, through Jan. 2, 2018, we collected data in the following ways:

- › Followed and documented participants' social media activity, particularly focused on Facebook profiles (n=17),
- › Surveyed participants (n=51) about their thoughts, perceptions and behaviors related to causes/social issues they were interested and engaged with (n=115 survey responses to four surveys),
- › Collected artifact data participants shared and posted on social media, and
- › Followed current events and other important issues covered in the media during this time.

¹⁴ Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (p.68-69).

¹⁵ Crang, M. & Cook, I. (2007). *Doing ethnographies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (p.34).

APPENDIX B

TOP ACTIONS TAKEN FOR CAUSES/SOCIAL ISSUES (BY TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIONS REPORTED)

I voted for political representatives that have views on these topics similar to mine.	3384
I have signed petitions (including online).	1961
I have posted or shared content that supports or protests this topic on a social media platform.	1612
I have changed the way I purchase products and/or services (for example, started or stopped buying products or supporting a brand/company).	1339
I have contacted my political representatives expressing my opinion on these topics.	1116
I have participated in marches and/or rallies (demonstrations or events, assemblies or gatherings) related to these topics.	1071
I have donated money to organizations that address this topic.	992
I have participated in protests (a formally organized show of strong objections to actions or policies).	802
I am on the board of organizations that address this topic.	415
Other than as a board member, I have volunteered with organizations that address this topic.	320
I have taken steps to start a company or organization that supports or protests this topic.	308
I have taken steps to run for public office.	207
I have taken no action on behalf of this topic.	1765
Other, please specify...	134

YEAR IN REVIEW: AN INVIGORATED GENERATION FOR CAUSES AND SOCIAL ISSUES

THE 2017 MILLENNIAL IMPACT REPORT

The Millennial Impact Project

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